

die human beings? And when it comes to the kingdom of literature, this tendency to set up codes and dogmas, dictators and high priests, to turn poetry into something between a church and a laboratory, a religion and a science, seems to me horrible. True, it is nothing in the least new for critics to talk as if they were the Eternal Father or, at very least, the Recording Angel. But there seems to be at the moment a recrudescence of this particular nuisance; and never was there less excuse for such dogmatisations. No doubt the spectacle of a number of very angry gentlemen of letters all laying down the law differently, and excommunicating one another like so many anti-popes, matters little in itself. One can look on, or away. But that a credulous faith in the literary judgments and systems they formulate should distort the taste and enjoyment of a certain number of other people, does matter rather more. There are, I feel, at present too many money-changers in the Temple of Literature, too many middlemen in Sion, too many guides and dragoons jabbering at the foot of Parnassus. It may be said that they only dupe those who are set on being duped by someone. It is likely enough that there is no real cure but the besom of Time. Still, this question of the uses and abuses of criticism is perhaps also not unamusing in itself. Criticism is a wide term. To begin with, it can include

the vast field of reviewing; and the
usefulness of that no
one can question. We may feel that we
could do with
less of it; but in the present spate of
literature it is as
necessary as the booksellers* catalogues it
supplements.
Reviewers are critics, among other things;
though it is
a very different task reviewing books that
have not been
read by the world, from re-viewing works
it already
knows. How different, indeed, too many
reviewers in-
excusably and incorrigibly forget. The
reader wants first